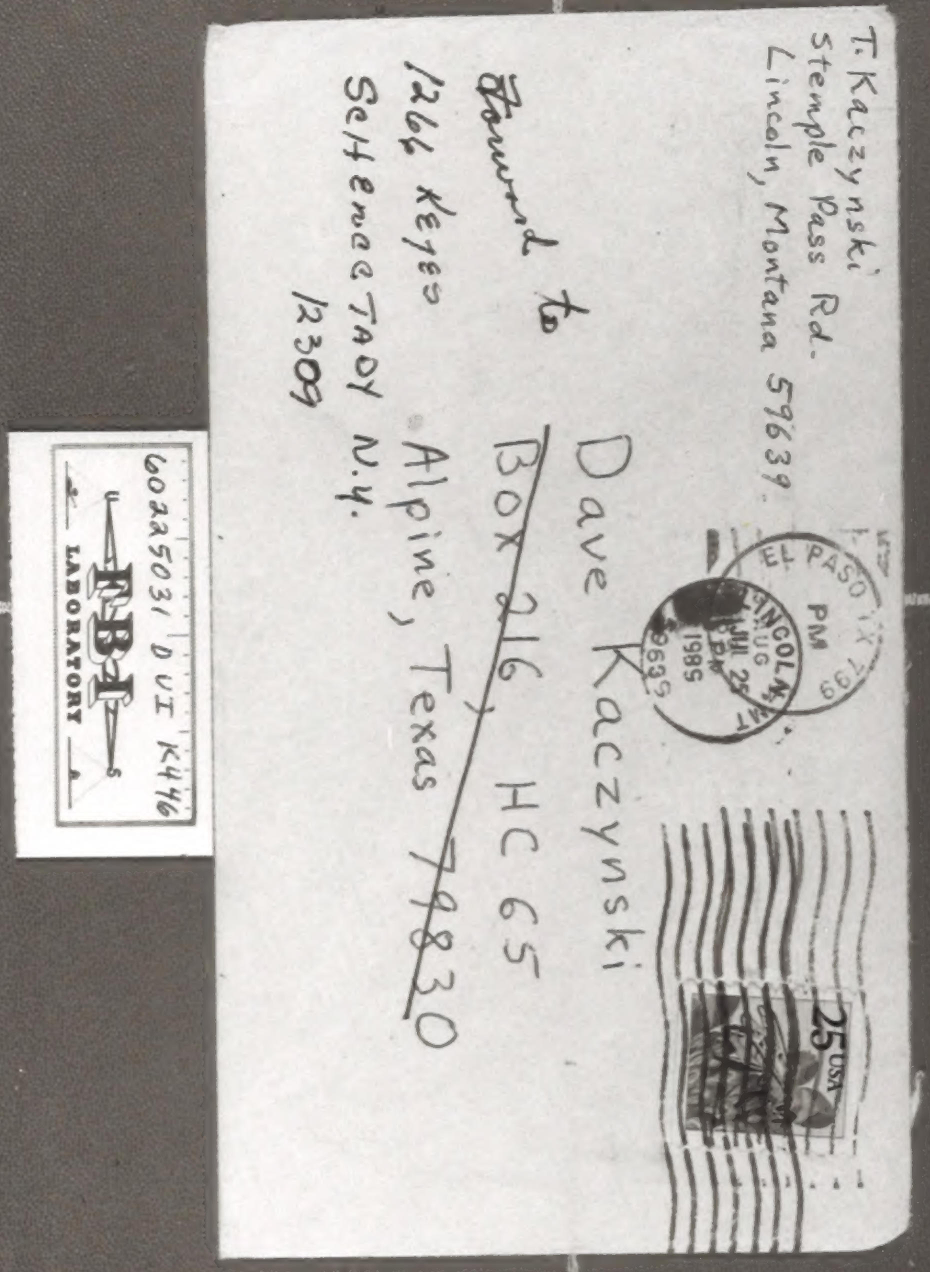
T-66

T-66

Page 6 needs to be translated
(2 paragraphs are in Spanish).
Also page (-1) - all in Spanish.



Dear Dave: I apologize for taking so long to answer your last letter. I've been somewhat harrassed and busy lately. For instance, I've had to build a 9-foot-high fence to keep the deer out of my garden.

In a way it's just as well that I didn't answer your letter immediately, because, after not having looked at it for a month or more, I re-read your story ("the Conjurer's Stone") and got a fresh impression of it. I found that, the second time around, those metaphors and similes that I objected to went down much more smoothly. I still think a more spare and unadorned style* would be more suitable for this material, but I find most of those figures of speech less objectionable than I did the first time around.

In any case it's a damn good story, both as to the material provided by Juan and as to your re-telling of it, and I repeat my suggestion that you should make a collection of these stories for publication. If you don't have enough material for even a slim volume you might try to find a magazine that is oriented toward Southwestern folkloric or ethnic

*It's really unfair of you to call this a "reportorial style". Consider Maugham's "the Razor's Edge", Orwell's "1984", or Hemingway's work. Unadorned, straightforward writing; but, whether or not you like those works, you would hardly say the writing is merely "reportorial".

60225031 DUI K446

material or something along those lines.

I do think that there are some technical details in the story that definitely need cleaning up — for instance, the way you tried to portray the old man's speech defect (bushardsh for buzzards, etc.) — but maybe those are the suggestions of mine that you did accept. If you want my further comments on your revised version of the story, I'll gladly give them to you.

Of those figures of speech that I criticized, there is one to which I still object pretty strongly; if you don't omit it altogether I think you should change it in some way. I have objections to this particular figure that I didn't mention in my first letter because I had already objected to it on other grounds. This figure appears on p. 1: "A few would descend to the street on strutting claws...". You won't like it, but I'll tell you frankly that to me the phrase "on strutting claws", as used here, sounds hackneyed, like something from a genre story. Moreover, there is a defect in the logic of the sentence: The birds don't <u>descend</u> to the street on their <u>claws</u>; they <u>descend</u> on their <u>wings</u>, and <u>after</u> they reach the street they strut on their claws. This defect in logic made the sentence ring very badly to my ears, and I think many other readers will react the same way.

I'd like to make a comment on your reaction to my criticisms: Your reaction smelled strongly of wounded vanity; you defended what you had

Note: I've just re-read your letter and decided that after all it does <u>not</u> smell strongly of wounded vanity. But it does smell <u>slightly</u> of wounded vanity.

DUI K446

written in order to defend your ego. Yes, I know it hurts to have someone point out defects in something on which you've spent a lot of time and trouble, but bear this in mind: In writing, your object is to communicate something to your reader — not only empirical facts, but feelings, impressions, etc. If you get from your reader a bad reaction to a certain sentence (i.e., a reaction that is different from the kind of reaction you wanted to get), then that is an indication that you have not successfully communicated to your reader the thing that you wanted to communicate. Consequently, instead of automatically defending what you have written in order to protect your ego, you ought to salve your wounded vanity as best you can and consider how you can rewrite the sentence in order to convey to your reader the kind of impression you want him to get.

Of course, this doesn't apply to just <u>any</u> reader, but only to readers of the class with whom you are trying to communicate. (For instance, if you are writing for intelligent and sensitive readers, you can ignore the reactions of people whose preferred reading is Batman Comic Books.) Also, even among the class with which you are trying to communicate, the reaction of a particular individual reader may be ideosyncratic and atypical of the class. But still the general principle applies: <u>listen</u> to your readers and be prepared to modify your writing until you find that it communicates to your readers the kind of impression that you want to communicate. Of course, I realize that

60225031 D U I K446 FBI

artistic vanity makes this difficult.
I apologize for preaching.
As I've said before, I liked "The Conjurer's Stone" very well indeed, in spite of my criticisms, and I look forward to reading any more of these stories that you may care to send me.
As for the latest story you sent me,* I found it interesting, and in some way it seems to cast some kind of a light on human nature; though of course it was less impressive than the longer stories — "The Conjurer's Stone" and the one about the unfaithful wife. I have only one criticism of the way it was written: "alot" is not a single word but two separate words: "a lot" ... "a lot of money", "a lot of time", etc.

(Note: Here's an illustration of the point I made above. I criticized your "cracked mud" simile as unclear. You defended it by explaining that 3 comparisons between the man's face and cracked mud were involved. It was all very cute; but the cracked mud simile didn't convey all that to me, and I don't think any other reader would get all that from the simile. Thus, if you want to communicate all that to the reader you'll have to find some better way of doing it. To me the simile just seemed slightly confusing.
In your letter you wrote "you're clearly... a lot more interested in Juan's stories than you

* the one about Juan and the old widow

60225031 DUI K446 FBI

→ Borrowed plots common among great writers. In "The Razor's Edge" Maugham claimed to be merely reporting facts. If most people had told that story it probably would not have seemed very interesting, but as Maugham told it, it made a superior Novel. Note that he told his story for the most part in plain language. The effect of "The Conjurer's Stone" must depend...

→ heavily on your retelling, since it could hardly be just a literal translation of Juan's words. If I or someone else told the story, it might have seemed pointless and uninteresting. As you tell it, the story is effective and the characters live. But there were some things that, as I responded to them, detracted from the effectiveness of the story. These are the points I criticized. Of course, other readers might respond differently to some of these things.

are in mine." I don't know whether that is true or not, since I don't have for comparison the material originally given to you by Juan. I think it's highly probable, however, that the attraction of the stories is to an important extent due to your re-telling of them. I take it you are writing these stories from memory after some lapse of time, so they could hardly be exact reproductions of what you heard from Juan — even if all the figurative material that we are discussing were left out. So I think there must be a great deal of "you" in the stories.

On the other hand, if to you the important part of the stories consists in the expression of rather elaborate ideas by a single brief phrase — as with all that stuff you say was supposed to be expressed by the "cracked mud" simile or by the "evil thing eager to be free" phrase, then you're right — that kind of thing is of no interest to me. I don't see how it could be of interest to anyone, since I cannot conceive how any reader could be so preternaturally astute as to deduce that all those meanings were supposed to be encoded in the phrases given. If you like to devise literary conundrums for your own amusement, there's nothing wrong with that, but you can hardly expect your readers to appreciate ideas that are expressed in a code that only you know how to decipher.

When I say that those phrases don't convey all that to the reader, I don't mean merely

60225031 DUI K446 FBI

that the reader doesn't explicitly formulate those things to himself; I mean that those meanings are not conveyed even as sensations or vague impressions.)

Quisiera que yo pudiese ir a Tejas, como me has sugerido, pero sería demasiado costoso, y me horroriza el largo viaje en autobús. Me agrado de que Juan tenga empleo remunerado, y de que su pierna esté mejorada. ¿Habéis averiguado si Juan puede obtener un subsidio (pension)? ¿O ayuda financiera a causa de su accidente?

Salúdale a Juan de mi parte, y significale mi agradecimiento por su invitación; quizás algún día yo pueda aprovecharla.

Ted

P.S. You suggested I should "make an earnest effort to enter the consciousness and spirit of a story as it is written before making up your [my] mind as to how it should be written." I didn't make up my mind in advance how the story should be written. I was in effect merely reporting to you my response to the story. I responded well to the story as a whole, and to those parts of the story that were told in plain language (which comprised most of the story). I responded more or less badly to the figurative expressions — not because of any preconceived theory but because they just didn't go over very well — they didn't contribute to my response to the story — they didn't convey to me any impression that you would be likely to want to convey. Of course this is only my personal reaction and it may be that other readers would respond differently. As for "making an earnest effort to enter the consciousness and spirit of the story" — it's your job to communicate that consciousness and spirit to the reader — you can't expect the reader to divine by

By the way, I showed "The Conjurer's Stone" to the Librarian and she liked it very well; she disagreed with me about those figures of speech – she liked them and said they helped her to visualize what was going on.

magical insight what that "consciousness and spirit" is supposed to be. To me your story didn't communicate all those abstruse meanings that you explained in your letter, and that's <u>your</u> fault — the reader can't read your mind, he can only read what you have written. If I had been asked (after reading the story but before reading your letter) what the story was "about", what its theme was, I would have answered that I didn't see that it had any particular theme, that it was just the story, sensitively told, of one of the formative experiences of a young Mexican boy, throwing an interesting light on his character, on the traditional Mexican culture, and on the relations between the generations in that culture. If pressed, I might have mentioned the conflict between the imagination and empirical reality as <u>one</u> of the possible themes of the story, but I would have mentioned other themes that made equally good sense as interpretations of the story. For instance, the story might have been about Juan's escaping from the psychological domination of the old men and learning to think independently. Viewed a little cynically, the story might have been about disillusionment and a consequent hardening of attitude. By the way, I think one of the marks of good literature is the absence of a single, unmistakeable theme. Of course, many excellent stories do have a single, clear theme, but more often the finest stories (even though there is a unity to the impression they give) can be looked at from various possible angles and can be differently

60225031 DUI K446

P.P.S. In your answer to my criticisms you gave the impression that you were expecting your reader to perform some kind of a technical exercise in literary interpretation— (8)

interpreted depending on how one looks at them. This is part of what makes the story interesting. So it is a point in favor of "The Conjurer's Stone" that no one thing stands out clearly as "the" theme of the story. But remember that if you do want the reader to feel that the story is about one particular theme you can't expect him to guess it by divine inspiration — you have to convey it to him. You can't ask the reader to "make an effort to enter the consciousness and spirit of the story" — your job is to draw him into that consciousness and spirit — otherwise he has no way of knowing what that consciousness and spirit is supposed to be.

As for those figurative expressions we've been discussing, to me most of them didn't seem well handled and didn't contribute anything to the story. Other readers might respond differently. But I don't see how you can expect any reader to be so clairvoyant as to perceive all those things you claim to be expressing in the story.

I can't help suspecting that you've misled by the critics. I'll bet that when the great writers write a story they don't start out with a theoretical concept and build a story around it (there may be exceptions of course). I'll bet they usually write what feels right — what makes a good story — what touches the emotions or the imagination. Then the critics come along and "interpret" the story and "discover" its theme. I won't comment on the validity of their interpretations, but I do think the interpretations are ex post facto and do not usually represent the way the author actually built the story. Of course half a dozen different critics may give half a dozen different interpretations of the same story. Shirley Jackson, in response to speculations about the "meaning" of a story she'd written, said that it was "just a story".

— Ted

60225031 DVI K446 FBI

Speaking of ozone depletion and the consequent increase of ultraviolet light from the sun, I read not long ago that, unless sunglasses are of an appropriate type designed to exclude ultraviolet, they actually damage your eyes rather than protecting them. The reason is that, by excluding much of the visible light, the sunglasses cause the pupils of your eyes to be more dilated than they would be without the sunglasses, so that a larger amount of ultraviolet (not being excluded by the glasses) gets into your eyes. So it would seem to be important to have sunglasses that give proper protection.

Next time I get into Helena or one of these other cities around here, I may be able to get you a pair of sunglasses that excludes ultraviolet. Please let me know whether you want me to do this, and also let me know what is the highest price that you would be willing to pay for such sunglasses. I think mine cost something like 7 or 8 dollars 3 or 4 years ago, but I might have to pay a lot more than that. You know how it is — I got mine cheap at an Osco drugstore, but if they don't have them there anymore I might have to get them at an optician's shop where they might charge 30 bucks for the same damn thing.

I assume that any glasses that fit me will approximately fit you. Actually, the ones I have now don't quite fit me. The things that go over the ears are too short. So I taped some rubberbands to them. The rubberbands go around the back of the head and hold the glasses on.

60225031 DVI K476

Querido hermano:

Pues, al parecer, no soy bueno para predecir la lluvia. Inmediatamente después de despacharte la carta en que me quejé de la sequía, tuve que volver a casa en una tormenta lluviosa. Y ya vamos recibiendo mucha lluvia.

Sin embargo, el porvenir distante parece funesto. Según las últimas predicciones que he leído, el clima de esta región, debido al efecto de invernáculo, se cambiará a través de un período de 35 ó 60 años (siendo más probable 35 que 60) de tal manera que sufrirá sequías prolongadas, y morirán todos los abetos y (si mal no me acuerdo) los pinos lodgepole — lo cual quiere decir que morirán casi todos los bosques de esta parte. No es muy probable que yo viva 35 años más, pero es de suponer que los mismos efectos se producirán en menor grado mucho tiempo antes de 35 años de aquí.

Por supuesto, tales predicciones no son seguros. Podría resultar o mejor o peor que lo predicho. Pero, teniéndolo todo en cuento, el efecto de invernáculo, la desaparición del ozono, etc., parece probable un porvenir bastante funesto, y se debe preguntar si la agricultura podrá alimentar el infinito número de habitantes del mundo. Yo preferiría que no. Mejor que tengamos una gran baja del número de habitantes.

60225031 DUI K446 FBI